



## Questions & Answers

# Water service meters

## *Information for residents*

Washington's Water Use Efficiency Rule requires water systems to install service meters on all residential connections by January 22, 2017.

### **Why do water systems need meters?**

Meters provide instantaneous, hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, seasonal and annual variations that tell the story of efficient versus inefficient water use. This helps water managers understand where and how to invest in their water system, thereby ensuring a safe and reliable supply of water for customers now and into the future.

Understanding how much water each homeowner uses each month can help water systems manage water supplies, especially during drought or other emergencies.

### **Why do homeowners need a water meter?**

If you don't have a meter now you're probably paying a flat rate for your water every month. That means customers who use a lot of water pay the same fee as customers who use less water. After your water system installs your water meter, you may enjoy some new benefits. For example, your meter can indicate a leak on your property. Access your shut-off valve and you can stop a leak before it causes any more damage to your property. Your meter also will allow you to manage your family's water use. Homeowners who use less water may pay less when they go from a flat rate to a rate based on actual use.

### **Who's responsible for compliance? Homeowners or water systems?**

Water systems, not individual homeowners, must comply with the law. However, a homeowner who refuses to have a meter installed will put the entire water system into the difficult position of noncompliance. We will review compliance with the metering deadline sometime in 2017, and notify any water system not totally metered that it is out of compliance with the requirement. We may work with the system to identify a reasonable installation schedule through a bilateral compliance agreement.

### **Who will pay for my meter and how much will it cost?**

It's up to the water system owner or manager to decide how they will finance the new meters. When we adopted the rule in 2007, we predicted that each meter would cost \$800 if financed for 15 years at 6 percent interest (\$87 a year or \$7.25 a month). With inflation, most water systems today report paying \$800 to \$1,200 per connection for labor and materials.



HELPING TO ENSURE SAFE AND RELIABLE DRINKING WATER

## **Will my water system change my rates after meter installation?**

It's up to the water system owner or manager to determine how they want to use the meters as a way to pay for needed improvements, maintenance or operation of the water system. Again, if yours is a home that uses less water, you may end up paying lower rates when you pay for actual use instead of a flat rate.

## **What kind of financial assistance is available?**

Very low-income homeowners may be able to borrow the cost of materials and labor needed to install a meter from USDA Rural Development at 1 percent interest. To find out whether you meet the minimum qualifications, visit <http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/4200/rd-funds.pdf>



## **For more information:**

Call your ODW regional office.

**Eastern Region:** Spokane 509-329-2100

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